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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6224  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000604

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: TENSIONS HIGH, RUMORS RAMPANT IN SOUTH KIVU

REF: A. KINSHASA 582

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 545

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Tensions are high in South Kivu province following warnings from leading political and religious figures warning of alleged foreign plots to launch a "new war" in the region. The recent arrests of purported foreign nationals in the province has added to a growing chorus of rumors and conspiracy theories about "infiltrations" of fighters from neighboring countries. MONUC officials state, however, that such reports are unfounded. The continuing standoff with dissident Banyamulenge soldiers in the High Plateau region of Minembwe, attacks by Rasta militiamen, and long-standing ethnic distrust have all contributed to tensions about security, often fueled by a propensity for rumors to prevail over hard evidence. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Fears about security have increased in South Kivu in the past weeks as unfounded and unsubstantiated rumors of the infiltration of foreign fighters and the possibility of a renewed conflict spread throughout the province. Recent statements by provincial leaders, including the governor and the Catholic archbishop, have sparked small student demonstrations and growing fears among the population. MONUC officials in South Kivu say the situation is tense and at a crucial point that could lead to wider violence if the rumors are not clearly refuted by provincial and national leaders.

[1](#)3. (SBU) South Kivu Governor Celestin Cibalanza (a member of the pro-Kabila PPRD party) alleged in a Bukavu press conference May 27 that three Burundian nationals recently arrested by provincial authorities claimed they had been recruited in Bujumbura to fight for a group of Banyamulenge dissident soldiers in the Minembwe region. According to Cibalanza, the detainees further claimed numerous others from Burundi had infiltrated the DRC to join the dissidents, and had already positioned themselves in the provincial capital of Bukavu. The governor claimed these statements were proof of a plan to launch another war in South Kivu.

[1](#)4. (C) In a May 21 meeting with PolOff in Bukavu, however, Cibalanza said the three presumed Burundians were apparently duped into joining the dissidents. During interrogation by military authorities, Cibalanza said the detainees claimed they were recruited by unknown persons in Bujumbura to participate in a regional sports competition in Uvira. Once they arrived in the DRC, they were reportedly forced by armed men to join dissident Banyamulenge forces led by Colonel Venant Bisogo and Major Michel Rukunda. MONUC officials in Uvira said the three escaped their captors, fled to the local UNHCR refugee camp to seek repatriation, and were

subsequently arrested by police before being handed over to the military.

15. (C) Shortly after Cibalonza's public statements, Monsignor Francis-Xavier Maroy, the Catholic Archbishop of Bukavu and an influential voice in the province, released May 28 a letter he had earlier given to the French Ambassador. Maroy stated the people of South Kivu were living under a "psychosis of war" and that the elements for a new war have been prepared by various actors. The Archbishop claimed there had been a "massive and systematic" infiltration of foreign fighters into the province from Rwanda. Maroy cited as his "proof" the allegations Cibalonza had made the day before. He further alleged that ex-ANC commanders were placed in nearly all positions of authority within the province's military command structure. Maroy claimed the situation is similar to that in the late 1990s before the Rwandan invasion of eastern DRC. (Comment: Maroy is well-known for his virulent anti-Tutsi views, and these comments further reflect that outlook. End comment.)

16. (C) Student leaders held a series of small marches in Bukavu June 1 to demand stronger measures be taken by the government and military authorities to prevent the so-called infiltrations. Protesters also demonstrated at MONUC facilities, blaming the peacekeeping operation for "not doing enough" to stop the violence. On May 31, police forces conducted a raid on a tobacco factory warehouse, arresting 23 individuals alleged to be Rwandan. According to MONUC officials in Bukavu, one of those arrested was Jean-Pierre Mazambi Wilondja, the former Mobutu-era Congolese ambassador to Burundi who later joined Azarias Ruberwa's RCD party. Appointed South Kivu vice-governor in 2002, he is alleged to have collaborated with Colonel Jules Mutebusi during the 2004

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attack on Bukavu. Mazabi returned to the provincial capital last year during the presidential election to campaign for Ruberwa, but soon left the area due to security concerns.

17. (C) Governor Cibalonza, in addition to FARDC Regional Military Commander General Sylvain Tshikwey, claimed "Rwandans" are behind the current security problems at separate meetings in Bukavu with PolOff on May 22 and 23. Tshikwey added that Bisogo and Rukunda are actively

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recruiting, and using "agents" in Rwanda and Burundi to infiltrate additional forces into the High Plateau. Munyamulenge FARDC General Patrick Masunzu, a Kabila ally, said he believes the dissidents are recruiting in advance of a future "invasion" from neighboring countries. Uvira Territory Administrator Daniel Eloko said May 24 the borders in the southern part of the province, particularly in the Ruzizi plain area, are porous, and the dissidents exploit this weakness to bring in troops and weapons. None of these officials, however, provided evidence to back their claims.

18. (C) MONUC officials in South Kivu recently investigated allegations of infiltrations and report there is no credible evidence to support the claims. MONUC-Uvira Head of Office Alessandra Trabattoni told PolOff June 1 the claims made by Cibalonza and Maroy in particular appear to be "without foundation." Trabattoni said local Congolese security and intelligence officials refute the stories as well, adding that the statements are likely being made for "political reasons." She said police and FARDC officials have no evidence of their own to substantiate reports of infiltrations. Trabattoni and other MONUC officials had told PolOff during his May 21-29 trip there was evidence of one or two individuals crossing illegally, but no "massive" movements into the DRC.

19. (C) Other factors have contributed to heightened security concerns in South Kivu, including an attack by Rasta militiamen May 26 not far from Bukavu (ref A). In addition,

the Banyamulenge dissidents still refuse to integrate, instead demanding the "mixage" option being implemented in North Kivu (ref B). The dissidents' ongoing rebellion further contributes to anti-Banyamulenge sentiment in the region, adding to fears of supposed Rwandan plans to invade the DRC.

¶10. (C) Comment: While South Kivu is generally stable, the statements by Cibalonza and Maroy could risk upsetting what is always a delicate balance in the province. The current situation is another example of the always-active South Kivu rumor mill spinning into overdrive. However, with an increasingly troublesome situation evolving in North Kivu, claims of imminent war -- fueled by rumor, political manipulation, and ethnic animosity -- can only make matters worse. Though MONUC's investigations demonstrate the allegations of infiltrations to be false, many in the province seem to believe more in conspiracies than evidence. End comment.  
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